

# OUR NATIONAL PULPIT.

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## TO THE READER.

“OUR NATIONAL PULPIT” is a new enterprise with the Editor. It is feared by many that it will be a fruitless one. We are entering upon an unknown sea and know not how soon some unexpected rock may render us a hopeless wreck — still we venture. There is no night so dark that the Star of Bethlehem may not relieve the gloom, there is no tempest whose tossing may not be calmed by the word of Him who spake as never man spake. The truth of the matter is, something must be done to help our effort to carry the Gospel to the 100,000 immortals sequestered in the lanes and alleys and courts of our great city.

Christians whose faith is worth anything at all must believe that these people can be saved. If so, then not to save them is a *crime*. But we can save them if we can reach them, and we can reach them if we will send or go for them. Other cities have demonstrated the practicability of this, why may not we? But we cannot reach them without employing proper agencies, and we cannot employ agencies without means and we cannot get means without effort. We have tried everything we can think of to get means, except Fairs, Festivals, etc., and have failed. Our total receipt from public Church collections this year has been less than \$200. We are therefore compelled to appear before the public in a new *role*. All the lovers of Christ we are sure will aid us in this enterprise. We have 10,000 Church members in our city. If one-tenth of these will make it a point to secure 10 subscribers we will have a missionary in every ward of our city. Missionaries to read, sing and pray the Gospel into hearts and lives of those who most need it. Where \$100 is spent to carry the Gospel to those who need it most, \$100,000 is spent in behalf of those who need it least. We make our appeal to all denominations. We are not sectarians — we are Christians. We are at work for the glory of a common Redeemer and for the spread of a common Redemption. We ask for the sympathetic co-operation of all people who believe in the spread of those precious truths which were enunciated by Him who is the only true Light of the world. The contribution of \$1.00 annually for such a purpose will hurt no one, and when we propose to supply you with a “Magazine” replete with the best thoughts of our foremost thinkers and workers, we do not see how you can refuse, the money ought to come without the double work to get it. But if it will only come, we will not mind the work we have given ourselves to earn it. We beg leave therefore to call your attention to the following prospectus :



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"OUR NATIONAL PULPIT"

is a new monthly Magazine, published in the interest of Home Evangelization and intended as a repository of the best sermons preached in this country, with an occasional sermon from beyond the seas. It is intended, as far as may be practicable, to make it fresh and original, containing no reprints but such as are of a high order, the sermons mostly being reported from the lips of the preachers by our own reporters. Each Number will contain two or three Sermons at least, and possibly two or three outlines. There will be of necessity a few pages devoted to advertising, but these will not detract from the value of the Book, as they will be so arranged that they can easily be detached from the pamphlet when you wish to bind them into a solid Book. The Book will cost \$1.00 to bind, making a valuable addition to your library at a cost of \$2.00.

REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD TAKE THE "PULPIT."

1st. While you are at Church hearing the Gospel those whom you leave at home may be reading it. 2d. It will be of real benefit to quietly sit and ponder the great and good thoughts of those whose genius and goodness have lifted them to the first ranks of pulpit power. 3d. The result of a year's subscription will be in a solid volume, which will be a valuable addition to any library. 4th. Some aged friend or invalid will find comfort in its pages of Gospel truth. 5th. YOU WILL BE CONTRIBUTING TO CARRY THE "POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION" TO THE MULTITUDES OF POOR WHOSE CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT PERMIT THEM TO GET IT IN ANY OTHER WAY.

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PREDESTINED TO DIE.

OUR good brother of the *Baltimore Presbyterian Weekly* seems to have decreed in the unfathomable mysteries of his editorial sanctum, an untimely fate for our little "NATIONAL." He predicts a possible survival beyond the winter, but an almost certain death in the summer. The woeful finger of warning is pointed to the ashes of an unfortunate predecessor, with the dreadful prediction that this also is "only born to die." Now all this would be sufficient to deter any sensible man from his work, if there were any truth in "the horrible decree." But being an Arminian we go for every man's making the most of his opportunities and letting results take care of themselves. "Our little one" may indeed be "born to die," but Arminian doctors don't say so. They say they have never known a more healthy baby, and that if its growth continues as at the beginning, that it must develop into a splendid success. The ephemeral existence to which he has alluded is no criterion for us. It was born under different auspices and of different parentage and had an entirely different nursing. We hope, however, that our good brother of the *Weekly* may do all in his power to raise the PULPIT to a place of influence and power, and thus prove "that great men are not always wise" in their paper prognostications.

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OUR WORK.

WE are trying to reach the non-church going classes with the Gospel of Christ. There are over 100,000 such in our city. Some have questioned this, but if all our Churches were filled every Sunday, which is far from being the case, there would still be over 200,000 at home—therefore we think it safe to say that at least one hundred thousand of our population seldom or never hear the Gospel of Christ—therefore we are aiming to have these homes, mostly in our lanes, courts and alleys, visited; the Bible read; the Gospel tidings spoken or sung into the hearts of the inmates. Their sick cared for; their children provided with old style instruction, clothing, or homes, if need be, Bibles given where needed, distress and destitution relieved, and such other work attended to as may be required. Special attention must be given to the sick, the destitute, and above all, to those whose hearts are aching for a Saviour's sympathy and love. We do not belong to that class of humanitarians who think food and clothes to be the all of life, but rather to those who believe in the kingdom of God first and the rest afterward.



# The Ministerial Office.

## A SERMON

BY THE LATE, REV. G. T. PERKS, M. A., LONDON, ENG.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”—2 Timothy, ii: 15.

THE solemnities of this day will not easily be obliterated from your memories; they will, we trust, mingle with the most treasured and profitable recollections of your life, and, by God's blessing, contribute largely to your spiritual life, the elevation of your ministerial character, the success of your evangelical labors, and the greatness of your everlasting reward. In the midst of the difficulties that will often beset your path, and the anxieties that will often oppress your spirits, you will be refreshed and invigorated by recalling the time and the place when the office of the Christian ministry was formally committed to you, and when the Holy Ghost separated you to your blessed life-work. You will do well to keep the anniversary of this day, and to observe it as an occasion for searching self-examination, for earnest prayer, and for renewed consecration to God. Many of us are to-day celebrating the anniversary of our own ordination. We are admonished by the retrospect of lengthening years that our opportunities of service are rapidly diminishing, and that very shortly we shall have to give an account of our stewardship. With feelings of profound solicitude, and yet of grateful confidence, we welcome you to the fellowship of the ministry. Let us thoughtfully and prayerfully ponder our common responsibilities and privileges as ambassadors for Christ, and overseers in the church of God.

1. You will not accuse me of indulging in trite commonplaces if I say at the outset, that everything you expect to be or to do, worthy of your name and calling as ministers of Christ, must have its root and foundation in deep personal godliness; in a free and unreserved surrender of your intellect, will, affections, conscience, and life to God. No hereditary religious advantages, no natural endowments, no course of training, no amount of culture, no mode of ordination, and no acceptability with the churches, can constitute an unconverted man a true minister of Jesus Christ. “Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth, seeing that thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.” The Lord said unto Peter, “When thou art converted strengthen the brethren.” John says, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly, our fellowship



is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ." Paul says, "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Again, addressing the elders of the Church of Ephesus, he says, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." And once more to his son Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." As Methodists we have always attached paramount importance to a converted ministry. We are not indifferent to the value of genius, of learning, and of eloquence; but nothing can compensate for the absence of inward and conscious religion in those who are called to preach the gospel and to save souls. "I am the vine," said Christ, "ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." You may preach orthodox, luminous, and eloquent discourses; physical fervour and a graceful elocution may give power to your utterances; eager multitudes may hang on your lips and applaud your talents; but if your soul is not in your work, it will go for nothing. You owe your position to-day to the fact that you have made a confession unto salvation "before many witnesses." You have experienced the "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; the "love of God has been shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto you;" you have been "born from above;" you know God as your Father, Christ as your Saviour, and the Holy Ghost as your Comforter. Religion with you is not so much a system, a creed, or a service, as a new and inner life, which dominates all the powers of your being and brings you into close and unbroken communion with the living God. With Paul you can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Again you have been called of God, and moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you the office and work of the Christian ministry. If you had indicated any doubt on this point, we should have been no parties to the step you have taken to-day. If you had been tempted by any prospect of worldly emolument, of social position, of literary leisure, or of public notoriety, we should have warned you that you were committing yourselves to a career of mortification and disappointment, that you were preparing clouds and thorns for your death-bed, and that your future would be too sad and dark to be contemplated. It were indeed rash and perilous presumption to intrude into an office so sacred and solemn, without the bidding of God. The true minister is a "man of God;" a "watchman" in the house of Israel; an "ambassador for Christ;" a "steward of the



mysteries of God." "No man taketh this honor to himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." You "heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send and who shall go for us?" And you responded, "Here am I, send me." You have felt the burden of spirit which finds relief in the apostles utterances, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Grace has been "given" unto you that you should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." It is because Christ has called and sent you that you can claim the mighty promise, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Let me then exhort you to cultivate close, habitual, reverent and loving communion with God. It is said of the great prophet who was translated that he should not see death, and whose faithful services are recorded by Jude, that he "walked with God." Be this your aim. By devoting seasons of solitude to the careful inspection of the tendency of your own spirit and to secret prayer; by the devotional study of the Holy Scriptures with a view to the nourishing of your own spiritual life; by reading the biographies of eminent men who were distinguished for their spirituality and their extensive usefulness; by frequent and confidential intercourse with a few kindred spirits who are pressing after the fulness of God; by these and such like means you must "stir up the gift that is in you." Remember, you cannot live on an official religion. On the contrary, the duties to which your lives are devoted will be your greatest peril unless you live near to God. To traffic professionally with holy things is an experiment which will issue in the utter paralysis of all the sensibilities of the soul; but if your personal religion is sound and healthy, all your services will prove subservient to the progress of your being and the fulness of your reward. Besides, your insight into the scope, harmony, and spirituality of God's word, will depend on your own piety. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The natural man may have scholarship and learning to enable him to expound the import of terms and phrases; but in the realms of living truth there are heights which he can never reach, and depths which he can never fathom without spiritual discernment. The mysteries of grace are hid from the wise and prudent, but they are revealed. The life of the soul is the light of the intellect in regard to the things of God. "He that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Again, the vividness of your call will depend on the vigor of your piety. If your faith be feeble, your love languid, and your hope clouded, your adversary will tempt you to believe that you have mistaken your path, and that you had better enter some other sphere. Some of a minister's



most harassing anxieties arise from this source. The work of God may be declining around you; your officers of the Church may treat you coldly; your family may be passing through trouble; and your own spirit may be sadly disquieted. In these circumstances the enemy will suggest that you might have more ease, profit, domestic comfort, and social enjoyment in secular pursuits. Your only safeguard is in your piety. Once more, your success in saving sinners and in edifying the Church will be in proportion to the growth of your own soul in the knowledge and love of God.

You must have faith in God, in Christ, in immortality yourselves if you hope to produce that faith in others; if you have that faith it will give a sanctity to your character and a power to your ministrations which, by God's blessing, will win many souls. Be warned against the luxurious habits and subtle dissipations of the times. The blessed apostle, who exhorts you to "endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," says, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway," The stars of the churches are held in the right hand of Him who is the Alpha and Omega: in His hands you will shed a clear and tranquil lustre on this dark and dying world; but if you fall out of His hands you will become wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Nothing can be more crushing in humiliation, intolerable in remorse, and terrible in doom than the end of that servant who closes his hollow and hypocritical career with the cry, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" and to whom the Lord shall say in scathing and scornful indignation, "I never knew you." Nothing can be more joyous or glorious than the end of those who shall say, "We are unprofitable servants;" but to whom the great Lord shall accord the mighty words, "well done."

2. Far be it from me to invade the professor's chair, or to assume the functions of a tutor; but it may not be irrelevant to the duty before me, or altogether unacceptable to you, if I remind you that would you show yourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, you must give yourselves to diligent, earnest, systematic, and persevering study. You are now devoted to a service which in its relation to the well-being of man and the glory of God, well deserves and will richly repay the consecration of the rarest gifts and choicest acquirements. The times in which you live demand a well-trained and well-furnished ministry. The rapid spread of primary and higher education; the wide diffusion of literature; the establishment of reading and circulating libraries; the unprecedented activity and power of the press; and the numerous scientific and philosophical associations and institutions of the age, have combined



to invigorate the faculties and elevate the aspirations of the natural mind. It is incumbent on those who wield the mightiest instrument of intellectual progress to see that they are thoroughly equipped for their work. The assailants of the truth are often men of powerful and cultivated minds, and spare no pains in searching out what they suppose to be the vulnerable points of the Bible, and in endeavoring to subvert the Christian faith. You have satisfied the Church that you possess competent abilities, and it now remains for you to determine whether you will be content with a tolerated mediocrity or become "able ministers of the New Testament." You must not be discouraged if you cannot rival the luminaries of the Church. "It is required of a man according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not." By the conscientious redeeming of the time, by methodical work, and by unflagging industry you may overcome many deficiencies of nature and education, and attain a position of honor and influence. Some of you have enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a residence in the Theological Institution. It is much to be regretted that residence there is at present so brief and that the curriculum is so crowded; but you must endeavor to compensate for these drawbacks by maturing the plans which you have initiated, and by pursuing the studies which you have commenced. Solid learning is a slow path; it cannot be acquired by fits and impulses; it is the result of painstaking toil and indomitable application.

Aim at breadth and thoroughness of culture. Try to know something of everything, and everything of something. Every branch of science and every department of literature will contribute to the strength and vigor of your minds, and to the wealth and variety of your resources. In regard to many subjects, you will not have time to master the processes of investigation, but must content yourselves with accepting the results which have been reached by others. In astronomy, geology, chemistry, botany, physiology, and the like, you may not be proficient; but you will derive from those sciences some of the most striking and instructive illustrations of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. Let psychology or mental philosophy have a good share of your attention. Many persons rail against metaphysics who would have been none the worse for some acquaintance with it themselves. If you would acquire clearness of conception and accuracy of definition; if you would excel in analysis and generalization; if you would be masters of inductive and deductive reasoning, you must be prepared to understand and apply those laws which rule the origin and sequences of thought. To call a man who deals in obscure terms and incoherent sentences a metaphysical preacher, is simply irony. Nothing enables him to speak with greater clearness and precision than to be able to see the foundation on which he is resting, and the goal to which he is tending.



But you are students of divinity, and all your attainments and researches must be made subservient to the elucidation and commendation of the word of God. Make yourselves familiar with church history. Almost every century will present some event which you ought to know, some lesson which you ought to learn, and some worthy whom you ought to venerate. It is impossible to understand some of the subtle definitions and distinctions in the creeds without a knowledge of the times and controversies which gave them birth. The more carefully you study Christianity as it appears in the writings of the early Christian fathers, the more deeply will you be convinced of the contrasts which it exhibits to the ecclesiasticism of the Middle Ages and of our own day. Study the great divines of ancient and modern times. St. Augustine among the Latins, and St. Chrysostom among the Greeks, are grand and glorious writers, whom no student should neglect. As students of English divinity you are heirs to a boundless inheritance. No language is richer in standard works than our own. Such men as the judicious Hooker, the learned Dr. Thomas Jackson, the eloquent Isaac Barrow, the gorgeous Jeremy Taylor, the saintly Leighton, the profound John Howe, and the practical Richard Baxter, have more enduring monuments than any they could have within the walls of Westminster Abbey. It would be a calamity to yourselves and others if you were to neglect altogether the noble works of those illustrious men for the sake of the more popular writings of modern authors. As Wesleyan ministers, you will, of course, give due attention to our own classics, especially to the sermons of Mr. Wesley. In those sermons you have the purity and strength of the English language, the marrow and fulness of evangelical theology, and rare specimens of exegetical skill and homiletical power.

Your text-book, however, must be the Bible; a book whose wonderful history and inexhaustible treasures will furnish occupation for a laborious and lengthened life. Master the original languages. You may not, perhaps, become exact and profound scholars, but you may easily make yourselves independent of translators, and that will be of great service to you as expositors and defenders of the truth. The date, genuineness, authenticity, inspiration, and contents of each book from Genesis to Revelation should be carefully studied; and all the aids of geography, archæology, contemporaneous history, and recent oriental discovery pressed into your service. With the Bible in your hands you will never lack absorbing and ennobling themes: its ancient records, its glorious poetry, its edifying biographies, its lofty ethics, and its sublime doctrines will furnish a wide and fruitful field for calm investigation and persevering research. The more closely and carefully you study the Bible, the more clearly and fully you will see that all its lines meet in the cradle, the cross, the sepulchre,



and the throne of the incarnate glorified Son of God. The central topic of the Bible—that which harmonizes and irradiates the whole, that which illuminates the darkest problems of human history and challenges the songs of higher spheres—is “the Lamb that was slain.” You cannot do better than to take for your motto the apostle’s words: “For I determined not to know anything among you; save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

3. So far we have referred chiefly to that which is preparatory to the great work of your lives—the preaching of the gospel. To the methods and objects of this work we must now direct your careful and earnest attention. The institution of preaching is in beautiful harmony with the structure, spirit, and design of the gospel. The gospel is an announcement of the most stupendous facts that ever transpired in our world; it is a proclamation of peace to every rebel of our fallen race; it is the “power of God unto salvation.” The Son of God was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor; to the twelve whom He sent forth, He said: “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” His last command was, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.” St. Paul writes, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.” Again he exclaims, “Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” During the conflicts of the Church with ancient pagan philosophy, and amid the darkness of the Middle Ages, preaching was the chief instrument in conserving and perpetuating a pure, vital, and aggressive Christianity. It has always held a prominent place in Protestantism. It was the weapon by which Luther shook the Papacy and won the Reformation. This old and divine institution is menaced by the pomp of ritualistic display; by the avowed hostility of secular lecturers; and by the subtle novelties of religious adventurers; and there is all the greater necessity that it should be upheld in its normal integrity and unimpaired efficiency. It is the throne of truth in these realms. Be resolved that it shall not suffer in your hands.

If you would succeed in preaching you must make due preparation. Some men who have a fatal facility of speech may for a time succeed without much preparation; but they will soon exhaust themselves, and their ministrations will degenerate into the mechanical utterance of a round of stale commonplaces. We have no inflexible rules to recommend for your adoption. Treatises on preaching are legion, and some of them may be read with advantage. But all minds can not be cast in the same mould. Nor is it desirable they should. You must resolutely cultivate your own powers by much reading, by vigi-



lant observation, by calm reflection, by earnest prayer, and by incessant practice. Nothing but preaching can make effective preachers. Write copiously but never fetter yourselves by what you have written. If your thoughts are clearly defined and logically arranged in your own mind, you will generally be able to command appropriate and forcible words. You will find the substance of your preaching in the Three Creeds. In the maintenance of those glorious formularies we claim fellowship with the Catholic Church of Christendom. Select topics of discourse which will require you to give prominence to the essentials of the gospel. Repentance, faith, and holiness were the watchwords in the sermons of our fathers; and although the form in which those topics are presented may be endlessly diversified, the matter of them must be retained, otherwise your preaching will be vapid, pointless, and unsuccessful. Avoid as much as possible controversial preaching. There are times, no doubt, when you must contend earnestly for the faith once for all "delivered to the saints," and "speak to the enemy in the gate;" you are set for the confirmation and defence of the gospel. But as a rule, controversial preaching will narrow the sphere of your intellectual vision and engender an unhealthy bitterness of spirit. Most of the errors of the day will be best exposed and exploded by a luminous and uncompromising exhibition of the truth. You must not be influenced by the popular outcry against dogma. There is nothing on which St. Paul dwells with greater frequency and emphasis than the guarding and diffusion of sound doctrine. To Timothy, he writes: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." "Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine." "But thou hast fully known my doctrine." In writing to Titus he says, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptedness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned." There is a kaleidoscopic gospel abroad which is ever changing its form and color to satisfy the frivolous criticism and dreamy sentimentalism of the age. You must be no party to these treacherous compromises. "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Preach the gospel; do not read it. Read sermons may have the advantage in elegance of style, in logical compactness, and in symmetrical grace; but they lack that freshness and force which accompany spontaneous and spoken discourses. If sermon-reading should ever become the practice in the Methodist pulpit, the soul-converting power for which that pulpit has been famous will soon decline. Other churches are abandoning it because it has proved a failure, and this is an additional reason why



we should not depart from the example of our fathers. In the delivery of your sermons be natural, dignified, and solemn. Shun everything at variance with the gravity and sanctity of your position and work. In spirit be earnest, faithful and tender. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. We then as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of the Lord Jesus. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Never lose sight of your great object, which is to save some; let the selection of your text, the subject of your discourse, the arrangement of your matter, and the scope and point of your application have a specific and persistent bearing on this issue. Compared with the salvation of souls, everything else sinks into utter insignificance. "Now, thanks be to God, which leadeth us always to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" Have faith in God: in the firmness of his promises, in the efficacy of his truth, and in the life-giving energy of His spirit. "According as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believed, and therefore speak." Unbelief, whether in preachers or hearers, will empty the world of all its vitality, and reduce it to a dead letter; but if it be delivered and received by faith, it will be "a power of God unto salvation." It will be a sorrowful and humiliating experience, if you have to exclaim with Isaiah, "All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people;" but it will be a joy unspeakable if you can say with St. Paul, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Yours will be an unenviable position in the great day if you have to stand in forsaken loneliness with none to present perfect in Christ Jesus; but if you turn many to righteousness your crown of rejoicing will flourish forever. "I charge you, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine."

4. There is another branch of your work which, as it is one of primary importance, must now be thoughtfully considered: we refer to the pastoral office. It is far from my intention to enter into anything like a formal defence of your orders. The figment of apostolical



succession is no doubt still cherished by a few mediæval dreamers, but it is utterly repudiated by some of the greatest scholars of the age. It has no foundation in the word of God; it collapses when tested by the facts of uncorrupted church history; and it is most dishonoring to Christ. The maxim, "Once a priest always a priest," asks us to believe that a man who is unsound in doctrine and immoral in life may still be a successor of St. Paul and St. John, and a true and authorized minister of Him who taught us to "beware of false prophets." Our Anglican neighbors who brand us as schismatics, should not forget the anomalies of their own position. When they have satisfied the Romanists that there are valid orders and sacraments in the Anglican church, we may perhaps begin to think about vindicating the validity of ours. Be assured that you will have reached the last extremity of pitiable helplessness when the only proof of your ministry is your letters of ordination. If you show by the purity of your character, by your self-sacrificing spirit, by your concern for souls, and by your zeal for Christ, that you are true men, the Church will hail you as true ministers. But whatever others may think or say of you, henceforth you will be the recognized and received pastors of the Methodist churches, and you may safely reckon on the confidence and co-operation of the people committed to your care. To you, therefore, we may address the words of St. Paul to the presbyters of the Church of Ephesus: "Take heed unto yourselves and to all this flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." And again, in the words of St. Peter: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraints, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

Your first duty as pastors has already been noticed under the head of preaching the word. It is by the clear, full, and faithful exposition and enforcement of the word of God that you must endeavor to quicken, foster, and mature the life of God in the souls of your flock. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The ascended Saviour "gave some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." In leading the devotions of the sanctuary you must endeavor to represent the present wants of your people, of the Church universal, of the nation, and the world; and to express these wants by prayer and "intercession for the saints according to the will of God." There is a glorious and all-embracing liturgy in the Bible in the supplications and thanksgivings of which every need of the soul and every phase of experience, in all the relations and circumstances of life,



is anticipated. In the administration of the sacraments you must not allow the abuses by which they have been perverted from their original simplicity and design, to betray you into the depreciation of their importance or into indecorum in their observances. In dedicating the young to Christ you may usefully remind parents of their duties and responsibilities, and the baptized of their obligations and privileges. In commemorating the Saviour's death you must never forget that "The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ. And the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ." It is the eucharistic symbol of an ennobling fellowship, and shall ever kindle in the heart of Christ's disciples the flame of universal charity.

As pastors you will have to govern as well as feed the flock of Christ. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." You must guard the purity of the Church by the maintenance of a godly discipline, not as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples of the flock." The oversight of the young will devolve upon you, "Feed my lambs" was the evidence of love which the risen Saviour exacted from his restored apostle. If you enlist the thoughts, affections and resolves, and services of the young on the side of truth and holiness, you will earn for yourselves a precious and enduring recompense, and lay the foundation of future and flourishing churches. Visit systematically the day schools, Sabbath schools, and boarding schools; form children's bible classes for juveniles, and adult bible classes for the more advanced. Speak often to the young privately, warning them of the perils of the times and commending to them the beauties of religion. Preach often specifically to the young; and in every sermon let them be sufficiently noticed to convince them that they are not forgotten. Do not doubt the possibility of their conversion, and try to gather them into fellowship with the church. If you should be spared to an advanced age nothing will afford you more exalted satisfaction than to meet, in the various walks of life, those who are indebted to you for their earliest impulses to good.

As to pastoral visitation in the houses of your people, while you will never be able to meet the extravagant expectations of many, you cannot neglect it without irreparable loss both to you and to them. Everything depends on system. If you cannot do what you would, do what you can. Be especially diligent in visiting the sick and the careless. Let them feel that if everybody else forgets and neglects them, they have in you an unfailing and sympathizing friend. Your preaching will be all the more real and pastoral if it reflect the state and experience of your people. The men who immure themselves in their study and bury themselves in books in order to elaborate elegant essays and brilliant orations, often betray a want

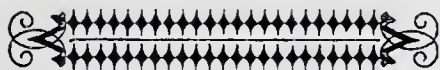


of those warm and tender inspirations which can only be caught amid the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, the successes and reverses of domestic and social life. In all your intercourse with your people be careful never to compromise the sanctity of your character, or to lower the dignity of your office. They will expect your walk and conversation to be a practical comment on the truths which you expound and the lessons you inculcate. "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." With St. Paul you must be prepared at all times to say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." As guides you must go before the people; as shepherds you must lead the flock. Thus for you to live will be Christ; in your spirit, character, conduct, and labors you will reproduce and represent your great Master and Lord. Your actions as well as your words will be a sermon of perpetual and persuasive power. And when you are numbered with the dead it will be said of you, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever."

In conclusion, let me remind you that you are called to exercise your ministry in the connection founded by John Wesley, and on behalf of the people called Methodists. The glorious memories of the past and the bright visions of the future should combine to animate you with a lofty enthusiasm and to provoke you to an unreserved consecration. "Other men labored, and ye have entered into their labors." They have bequeathed to you a noble heritage: a scriptural theology; a simple form of worship; an ecclesiastical system possessing vast resources of power, with wonderful elasticity of adaptation; and, above all, an example of godliness, of devotedness, of endurance, and of usefulness unsurpassed in the annals of the Church. You see your calling, brethren. If you magnify your office, your office will magnify you. If you fail to feel its importance, to realize its responsibility, and to appreciate its honor, and allow yourselves to be betrayed into a stiff and perfunctory discharge of your duties, the defects of your character and the inefficiency of your services will be all the more palpable by contrast with the greatness and solemnity of your work; if, on the other hand you magnify your office by giving to it all the convictions of your mind, all the impulses of your conscience, all the affections of your heart, and all the energies of your life; if you show that self and selfishness are swallowed up in an intense and all absorbing passion to save souls from death and to conduct them to the skies, your office will magnify you in the estimation of thoughtful men, and secure for you the approval of the righteous Judge.



Be faithful to yourselves, to your vows, to your vocation, and to the great Master. Some of you may be carried to an early grave, and some may be spared to a good old age, but whether your days be many or few, endeavor to redeem the fragments of time, and to condense into your allotted space as much real work as possible. "Never be unemployed, never be triflingly employed." "And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ; to Him be glory forever." "Finally, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."





## The Gospel—Life or Death.

### A SERMON

BY CHARLES F. DEEMS, LL.D.

Delivered in the Chapel of the University of New York,

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place.

“For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish.

“To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”—2 Cor. ii: 14, 15, 16.

THE apostle, in these verses, exhibits the responsibility and the honors of the Christian ministry, by an allusion to the mode of ancient Roman triumphs. On those occasions the victor rode up the sacred street in a chariot of ivory and gold; his children or other near relatives either sat at his feet or rode on the horses which drew him; flowers of varied beauty and great fragranc y were flung about him, and all the altars of the city smoked with incense. The senate followed immediately after him, and the procession was closed by the priests and their attendants. Immediately before the conqueror walked kings and princes and generals who had been taken in the war, some of whom were doomed to death and to some of whom life was to be given. Let one of us imagine himself to be in the place of a captured monarch, now loaded with chains and serving to grace the triumphal procession of him who had broken up his pleasant places, destroyed his Kingdom, and left desolation upon the site of his home. Let him contrast his present degradation with the former comfort and glory of his life, and his chains of bondage and his exposure to the taunts and insults of crowds of strangers with the glorious circumstances of his victor, and he may have some idea of his desolation of spirit. When to this is added the prospect of an early and miserable death, can we suppose for a moment that his soul was elevated by the sounds and sights which came to his senses, into anything like a pleasurable excitement? Do we not perceive at once that the very contrast between the glory of the conqueror and the degradation of the captive deepens the misery of the latter? To the degraded king, the captured prince and the vanquished general, will the bouquets and garlands of flowers yield an odor of delight? Will they not rather remind them of the flowers which are soon to grow upon their graves? As altar after altar is passed and clouds of incense float over the long line of the delighted and shouting populace, do they bring any reviving influence to *their* senses? No, no! When we can fully realize to our own



minds the painful feelings which burden and break those devoted to death, we can know something of the meaning of the phrase "the savor of death unto death." Every breeze which bore to them the perfume of the rose and the scent of the incense gave them a token of their final hour. The same flowers would be at the place where the executioner would deprive them of life, and the same incense would arise at the sacrifice which should attend their destruction. It was a "savor of death" accompanying them "unto death."

But, in that line of captives there are many who have not so often broken truces, not rejected the terms of the conqueror with so much scorn and contempt—captives who fought gallantly while they could fight, but yielded gracefully to the superior wisdom and power of him who now celebrates his victory. To them mercy is shown; the humble supplication is heard and the prayer granted; and beautiful deeds of mercy and forbearance as well as the terrible acts of sternest justice are brought to contribute to the splendor of the pageant. Such captives can look up; they are soon to mingle in the crowds of rejoicing citizens as *fellow*-citizens, and do not hesitate to add something to the magnificence of the triumph of him who has conquered their hearts by his kindness as he captured their persons by his prowess. When they yielded at discretion, they knew not whether they were to live or die for the glory of the victor; but now that kindness has been extended to them, they feel like men walking back from the edge of the grave, when every flower has new perfume and all incense is most reviving.

It is easy to perceive that to the conqueror the heralds who proclaimed the terms of treaty to these different captives would be equally acceptable whether those terms were agreed to or rejected; and now that these men were in such different states of mind, the people who shower roses upon the procession and pile his chariot with flowers of all richness, and the priests who make every altar to smoke with eastern incense, are just as agreeable to him, although to one portion of the captives they are giving an odor which speaks of death, while to the other they are sending a fragrance which is the very breath of life. Now, all these men who walk in the line of victory might have had life extended to them, and then the day of ovation would be the hour of lifting up their heads; but if all had refused, then all would be marching the march of death. The heralds carried terms the acceptance of which would have brought life to all, and then the perfumes which regaled the sense of the victor would have made a delightful atmosphere around all the captives. As it is, unto the conqueror there is a sweet savor, whether it be to the captives the "savor of life unto life," or "of death unto death."

Christ is set forth in these verses as one who is conqueror, and



the ministers of the gospel as those who are sharing his triumphs. This high honor is bestowed upon them because of the great responsibility under which they have been laid, and which they have faithfully discharged. The whole human race is represented as being at war with God. Originally the offspring of God, they have become embittered by the interference and influence of the spirit of evil. The spirit of enmity is in man and the principle of retribution is with God. It is a contest in which the most fearful odds are against our race. But God yearns over his fallen children, and sends messages full of tenderness and mercy, recalling them to obedience and allegiance. These messages are committed to his ministers, who go forth under highest responsibility to labor to heal a breach between the eternal Father and his finite, sinful children. They go to beseech men to ground the weapons of their rebellion and be saved.

No man can attach too much importance and solemnity to the ministerial station. It is at once the most interesting, the most delicate, the most laborious, and the most sublime relation, which he holds towards God and man. A man who enters upon it for a morsel of bread, for the broad field it gives to the various exercise of his intellectual abilities, or for any other secular and selfish motives, is ignorantly playing with the fiery bolts of the Thunderer and treasuring up wrath for himself against the day of wrath. It is a fearful thing to "run before we are sent," to take holy words on sinful lips, and to do the work of hell in the name of God. While there is every thing in the ministry of Christ's church to purify the heart, to sublime the feelings, and to elevate the aspirations of the intellect, in the truly devout and sincere servant of the Lord, there is likewise every thing to terrify the profane and to drive off the sinner. If the best benedictions of God rest upon and follow the laborious and humble preacher of his gospel, if the highest honors and the brightest crowns of glory await him in the eternal world, there are likewise shame and confusion of face and everlasting contempt in reserve for the man who, whatever acquirements the schools of the world may have given him, has had no preparation in the school of Christ for his high and responsible office, and has volunteered his worse than useless services to an embassy which God sends forth with peculiar power, and upon an errand which can barely be successful even when aided by the deepest wisdom of the court of heaven.

My friends, if you have ever, in the rapid making up of your opinions, concluded that the Christian ministry is a situation of honorable ease and of irresponsible engagements—if you have been accustomed to imagine the preacher of the gospel as continually enjoying the delightful alternation of pulpit excitement and the beguiling enjoyments of the study, disabuse your minds at once of this incorrect



notion and consider him as painfully aware of the immense obligations which he is under to God and to human society—and a more brain-trying and heart-wearing situation will nowhere be found upon earth. Let it not be supposed that we wish to strip the minister of the real and great enjoyments which he undoubtedly possesses; our object is to present *his* responsibility in preaching, by which you will be able to measure *your* responsibility in hearing. He *has* consolations: the eye of faith sees the result of his labor, and he is comforted; it is his to twine the graceful and beautiful up-shootings of childhood around the firm column of faith, to distill the cordial of comfort into the cup of sorrow and affliction, and to wake the last note of music on the shattered harp-strings of the heart, before God shall retune it for the performances of the heavenly choir. These are precious employments which comfort him while he labors, and sustain him when he is about to sink.

BUT LET US CONSIDER SOME OF THE GROUNDS OF HIS RESPONSIBILITY.

I. The very nature of the Lord whom he serves is such as to impress him with a feeling of great responsibility. A message of intrinsically trifling import often derives an immense importance from the character and station of him who sends it; and the bearer, although entirely aware of the fact that the message, whether understood and obeyed or not, will be of little effect upon the interests of him by whom he was commissioned, nevertheless often goes bowed under a weight of responsibility, because the high character and station, and the great power of his employer, are ever before his eyes. If, then, human character, or rank invests all its doings with importance, and all its agents with responsibility, how must he feel on whom is laid the obligation of negotiating for “the King of kings,” and “the Lord of lords.” What otherwise might be considered a most trifling service, the performance or neglect of which would be too insignificant a matter for notice, when it is devolved upon us by the command of God, and under the sanction of His high name, *then* woe be to us if we be not faithful.

The minister of the gospel considers the wisdom of his Lord—how high, how deep, how boundless it is. A correct notion of that wisdom makes him feel that God can not charge him with any message, the delivery of which will not honor God, and honor His servant, and do good to the human race. A portion of the Majesty of the Heavens is imparted to all His deeds, from the creation of an impalpable atom to the endowment of a living seraph; and His voice is potential, whether it breathes in the breeze that purifies the atmosphere and invigorates our frames, or thunders in the command which creates a world and produces light. Can, then, any part of a communication between the All-wise and His wonderful creature



and dependent, be esteemed trifling? And that wisdom which created man and formed the message, will it not discover whether that message has been delivered?

The minister reflects upon the power of his Sovereign. He knows that everything glorious and powerful in the universe has come into existence by His command; that He is everywhere present, seeing all things, hearing all sounds, and perceiving all thoughts, and that He can blot all things from existence by a word. A minister of an earthly king, when at a foreign court, has responsibility in proportion to his sovereign's extent of dominion and power; not only because the interests of his prince are extensive, but because his power is vast and crushes when it falls. The weight of his official responsibilities is increased, if he ascertain that his sovereign has agencies abroad which penetrate his counsels, and watch his policy and report his movements with the nicest precision of detail. Such, only increased in degree, is the feeling of a Christian minister. He knows that God is everywhere—that He perceives his thoughts in the closet, in the study, at the sick-bed, and in the pulpit; and that the all-wise God not only perceives the outward action so that He may be deceived by a show of propriety, but knows the intention which is deeply hidden beneath the act. He feels, continually, that the great solemn eye of God, with its unwinking steadiness, is bent upon him. Whenever a consciousness of idleness, or lack of interest in his work, comes upon him, there is a rebuke in that eye known only to the vision of faith, but sinking into his heart with touching and overwhelming power.

He knows how just his Sovereign is, that while He bountifully rewards His faithful servants, He likewise punishes the slothful and unjust. It is the will of God that all people within the reach of his influence should be so affected by his labors, as to be made the friends and servants of his Lord and Master. He has sent His servant; but if that servant fail to execute his commission properly, how can a just God make the people responsible for culture, for reproof, for warning, which they never had? Many a time, in the crowd and in the solitude, do these words of solemn and tremendous import come upon his ears and heart: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." "Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath



done shall not be remembered; but his blood shall I require at thine hand." (Ezekiel 3.) And the man of God knows that what the Lord in truth has said, "His own almighty arm will do."

II. There is that, moreover, in the very nature of a minister's work, which makes his responsibility to be of no ordinary character and weight. If the message of a king convey a communication to the most obscure of his subjects, and if that message be of little or no interest in itself, the delivery or non-delivery of which will have little effect upon the interests of either king or subject; if it even be a message which he would not trouble himself to deliver for any ordinary man, yet the bare fact, as we have already said, that it came from the chief power in the realm, will give it an importance which it could not otherwise possess, and lay upon the bearer a responsibility which he feels and acknowledges. But, if an ambassador be charged with a matter of importance, if the time in which he starts upon his diplomatic expedition be one at which his sovereign and the power addressed stand in peculiarly delicate and important relations to each other, if the manner in which he shall transact the business may lead to the highest glory or the most utter ruin of the power which he is about to address, and if that power be of extraordinary character among the nations, and if his sovereign takes the deepest interest in the people to whom he is sent, and if the faithful discharge of his commission will render his name and person for ever glorious, while a slothful disregard of his high duties will bury him for ever in shame, and erect a perpetual monument to his disgrace,—surely a civil agent, in such a station, will feel that no ordinary burden presses on his time and abilities. Such, only in an unspeakably higher degree, is the responsibility which is imposed upon the minister of the everlasting gospel. The relation in which mankind stand to their Creator is one of the most uncommon interest. The parties were formerly as closely united as spirit could mingle with spirit. The Lord and Master of the minister is the God and Father of the people. The communication between the parties was of almost perfectly unreserved familiarity; the affection was that of boundless love on the one hand, and of pure and full reciprocation and gratitude on the other. The rupture came from an influence without—an influence which hated God the Father, but knowing that it was incompetent to cope with Jehovah, malignantly and cowardly stabbed at Him through the creature and child of His love, unfortunate man.

Although the soul has been thus seduced from the home and love of its almighty and all-glorious Parent, there are traits of its high origin still lingering on its character, which even an intimacy with its foul ally can not obliterate. There is that natural longing for its higher home, which comes to the soul in the intervals of its mad rebellion. The minister of the gospel does not regard it as an



enemy of his Lord, so mean and contemptible that it is a matter of small moment whether or not a reconciliation can be wrought between it and the Eternal Father; he feels, while he addresses it, that it is a wonderful power, capable of adorning the courts of heaven by its singular abilities, if it can be rescued from the infernal delusion which has mastered it for a season. He knows its wonderful capacity of pleasure and pain, of virtue and vice. He knows that, when justice and right fill it with proper motives, it erects everywhere in the earth monuments of grace, and writes everywhere upon society the truth of God, and sheds over every scene the light of love; but when the dark spirit fills it, and nerves its arm with unholy power, that, like the possessed monarch of Israel, it drives every beautiful sight of goodness from its presence, that it rolls like a tide of blackness over every institution of God, and glories amid desolations, and shouts over the dying forms of goodness which it has pierced. The minister from the Court of Heaven knows that he is negotiating with no trifling foe, when he recollects that the old arch-enemy of God has thought it politic to league man with himself, in the daring and hellish combat which he vainly essays with the Eternal.

We see the importance of the minister's work in the immortal destinies of the soul. It sometimes seems as if all ministerial labor would be abundantly answered in the blessed effects which the gospel is capable of producing upon the face of our world, without a view of the expanded and everlastingly glorious results which it is to have in the world to come. The immense moral revolutions which it produces—the breaking down of altars reeking with human gore—the opening up of fountains, the streams of which make glad many a thirsty spot—the bearing aloft the torch of science and the light of intellect, for be it remembered, that no hands were as careful to cherish the light of learning as those of the ministers of religion, when darkness bent over the nations—the large share directly and indirectly which it possesses in everything which tends to humanize our race; these would seem to be sufficient returns for the outlay of physical and intellectual strength which the minister makes. But the importance of his work, and the responsibility consequent, are seen impressively in the fact that this present existence exhibits but the beginning of the results of his labors which are for ever to be expanding into new and unconceived combinations of happiness or woe. When the minister looks into the face of his fellow-man and reflects that he may be for ever a spirit of burning glory and ever increasing power, beauty and holiness in heaven, or an outcast for ever blackened by the curse of sin, and opening up in himself founts of ever-flowing, ever-blistering, ever-maddening torment, and to be continually by that torment developing almost infinite abilities to receive agonies yet to come; and when he knows that one or the other of these



results will probably be produced by the operation of his ministry, then does a sense of the high importance of his work, and the exceeding weight of his responsibility, fall like a crushing burden on his heart.

Again: To the minister is this fact known, that the Court which has commissioned him, even the Court of Heaven, is most deeply interested in the rebel which he is sent to recall to a sense of his allegiance. The Sovereign of the universe, the Father of the offender, endowed him with part of his nature, even immortality, and made him heir of the glories of His Kingdom. Then, there was a time when all the wisdom of the Eternal Mind brought its fathomless resources to bear upon the question of a reconciliation. The King poured out His treasures of mercy to rescue him from death. Heaven was robbed of its glory for a season, the bounding pulse of seraphic joy stood still, and there was silence in the upper world. The minister recollects the incarnation of "the King of kings" and the "Lord of lords;" he recollects how He met the dread seducer of man upon the great moral battle-field of the universe, and how He then meekly laid Himself upon the Altar of justice in the place of man; how sublimely He passed from the altar to the tomb, and wrestling down death and the grave, made it possible for terms of mercy to be offered to man. These terms the minister goes forth to present, and, standing before the strongholds of the rebel he is to lift up the flag of peace, to herald the glad tidings of salvation, and to offer life to the sinner. Never in the negotiations of earth—never in the movements of Heaven, was there so important a mission!

III. Finally, the importance of the minister's work and the responsibility of his station, is seen in the nature of the message he is to deliver and the moral and intellectual furniture necessary thereto. In the passage from Ezekiel, God commands him, "hear the word at my mouth," and in the text before us, it is called "the knowledge of Christ."

It is his to be much with God, to study the glory of His attributes and the perfection of His law, to follow that law in its powerful operations upon mankind, to go with Moses to the top of the terrible Mount, with the disciples to the scene of the transfiguration, and with the angels to the agony in the garden, and the last three on the cross. He is to proclaim God's sovereignty. This he is to do, though "the heathen rage," and "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His anointed." He must stand in the great pantheon of the world, and amid crowds of worshippers which throng every shrine he must proclaim *His* supremacy before whom Bel bowed and Nebo stooped. The infuriated may gnash upon him, but still must he proclaim God; and if the tide of wrath dash upon him, his last



words in dying must assert the supreme right of his Sovereign to the throne of the universe.

He must unfold the nature of that glorious Being, so far as He has revealed Himself to the comprehension of His servants. All that is profound in the spirituality of His existence, all that is impressive in the solemn idea of His eternal duration, all that is wonderful in the exhibition of His unlimited power, all that is terrible in the crushing destructiveness of His kindled wrath, all that is touching in the varied and beautiful exhibitions of His love, all that is moving in the sublime interposition of His mercy, must be presented to the eyes of the world, to strike terror into the hearts of His enemies and to win the love of the repentant and returning: "Who is sufficient for these things?"

The minister must likewise search the deep things of the spirit of man. He must watch every movement among the nations, observe every change in human society, and study the strange workings of individual souls. He must keep pace with the progress of science, and learn man and nations from their literature. Every faculty of the intellect, every avenue to the heart, every susceptibility of the soul must he know. How to bow the strong, proud man from the place of his elevation, how to stay the torrent of mad impetuosity in its rushing, how to sustain the feeble and lift up the dejected, how to apply delicately the balm of consolation to the sorest parts of a wounded spirit,—this must be the minister's skill. He must ferret out every excuse of a rebellious heart, fling off every insult offered his Master, and baffle the policy of a wily fiend. He must press home with power and perseverance every truth set forth in the *manifesto* which he bears, and contend for every inch of ground, and every specification contained in the plan of salvation with which he is sent to a rebellious world. "And who is sufficient for these things?"

Then, he must open to the rebel the view of his most dangerous situation; he must show him how soon the few appearances of his strength must be exhausted—how near is the conquering arm of Him who never struck but he destroyed, who will breathe upon him and there shall come destruction, who will have His enemies brought out and slain in His presence. These are distressing truths, but they must be pressed. The natural self-love of the soul will hate to have its weaknesses made known to itself and to others. The pride of the human heart will rise up against it, and as the faithful minister proceeds in the steady execution of his commission, every fiery passion may break out around, every threat may be used, and every art which is likely to operate upon his fears may be employed: but he must remain firm and unflinching, immovable as a mountain, and impartial as an angel. "And who is sufficient for these things?"

Every argument against Christ's plan of salvation must be answered,



every miserable fallacy of infidelity exposed, and the knowledge of Christ, as the sole and sufficient Savior of a rebellious world, be presented with untiring industry, with heart-felt earnestness, and with the sweet persuasion of unfeigned love. His adoption of the terms of mercy which God presents is to be urged upon man, by all that is glorious, just and powerful in his Creator; by all that is active, strong and immortal in himself; by the dread torture of an inward hell, and by the fadeless glories of a spiritual heaven.

But there is one feature in the nature of the minister's message more oppressive to him, and more startling to his hearers, than all else connected with it. "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life." It must be a solemn office for a man to go as a herald from a powerful king, who commands thousands and tens of thousands in his hosts, to a small but perseveringly rebellious town, with terms of mercy and with threatenings of wrath. As he looks upon the assembled citizens of the place, and reflects that every man there will either accept the terms or he will not; while it must be pleasant to his heart to think that many will be actuated by proper motives and be saved, how it must pain him to feel assured, that a large number now before him he must see again, where their sins shall be inflicting upon them the most dreadful and excruciating torture under which existence can be maintained!

So it is, friends, with the preached gospel. Not a sermon you have heard has been lost; you are better or worse for the hearing. Do not suppose that it is a matter of no concern how you hear. You may hate the truth, you may hate the preacher, you may hate the force of opinion which makes it indecent to refrain from attending divine service; you may laugh, you may trifle; your mind may be wandering; you may mock, but the preacher preaches on, and the words fall in your hearing, and God treasures up the words of the preacher, and the spirit of the hearer, and the number of opportunities; and every word of truth which you have refused to become "the savor of life unto life," He will cause to be the "the savor of death unto death." It is a fearful thought; who can bear it? And who can escape? You can not avoid the responsibility which devolves upon you by abstaining from a participation of the services of the sanctuary. God is there, the Bible is there, the preacher is there. You may remain away, you may be wrapt in softest slumber, and delighted with most pleasant dreams on God's day, when his minister is a few hundred yards from your bed, unfolding the sublime truths of the everlasting gospel; his voice may not reach you, may not disturb you, but the All-wise is writing up for you as fearful a sentence of condemnation as if you had gone to the house of God and heard. You *might* have gone,



you *might* have been profited; you have voluntarily put from you the teachings of truth. Your Lord and Master will hold you accountable, not only for the improvement of the opportunities you have had, but also for the improvement of those which you *might* have had.

The great Sovereign of the universe has secured the disinterested services of His ministers, by the clear announcement of the principle that He will hold in favor all who faithfully discharge their duties, whether their labors be successful or otherwise. We are acceptable to God "in them that are saved and in them that perish." The minister who is caught and slain by those to whom he is sent, even before he has fully opened his mission, is as acceptable to his Divine Master, as his brother who secures a foothold, proclaims the truths of the gospel, and turns many to salvation. The only motive, then, which stirs and sustains a minister in his discouragements is, that he is, "doing God service," even although the people may have his words become millstones, and tied about their necks to sink them deeper in condemnation. It is for Christ's sake, for God's sake, that we plead with you to be saved. If those who minister to you in holy things minister faithfully, from pure motives, they will be as acceptable to the Lord whether you all be saved or all be lost. But who that has the heart of a man in him, while he gives thanks to God who always causeth him to triumph with Christ, making manifest the "savor of His knowledge by him in every place," will not at the same time, when he knows that God is speaking through him damning words as well as saving words, cry out, with a spirit agonizing under the vast load of his responsibility, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

My friends, if God has made the message so awfully important, if He has made the ministry a station of such responsibility, what must be your responsibility, for whom we study, and pray, and labor? Christ must triumph at last; the whole world will accompany Him in the triumphal procession which He shall make into the glories of his Father's everlasting kingdom. They will be captives of war. Some will be saved, because they accepted Christ's terms for a peace, others will be miserably destroyed, because they resisted to the end. I shall be of that number, either an instance of God's mercy or a monument of his wrath. *You* will all be there; and whether a crown of fadeless brilliancy shall sit upon my spirit's brow, or the sentence of ruin burnt in there, the words which I have spoken to-day, will be unto you "the savor of life unto life," or "of death unto death." Which shall it be? *You must decide that question.* The word of God is equally powerful at all times. Will you receive it with meekness and be saved, or reject it and be damned? God will hear how you answer that question. "And may God help you to make an answer, that shall be the beginning of a happy and everlasting life to you!"





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THE  
DREAM OF HISTORY.

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A SERMON

BY

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DANIEL 4: 5.—“I saw a dream which made me afraid.”

Here is a dream which was not all a dream, as the sequel shows conclusively. “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown,” and no wonder then, that this oriental despot here records “I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed, and the visions of my head troubled me.”

And this is the vision that disquieted his soul: “I beheld a tree in the midst of the earth, and it grew and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof was much, and the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.



“I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven. He cried aloud and said, Hew down the tree and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit, let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth; let his heart be changed from man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given him, and let seven times pass over him.”

A singular mixing of metaphors this appears to be, and yet fearfully intelligible in the light of Daniel’s inspired interpretation: “My lord,” he says, with courtly deference, “the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

“The tree that thou sawest, which grew and was strong, and whose height reached unto heaven—Thou, O king, art that tree, for thy greatness is grown and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. And, whereas, the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven and saying, Hew the tree down, yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him. This is the interpretation: They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field \* \* till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And, whereas, they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.”

And we read that “All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar,” for “at the end of twelve months he walked on the palace (roof) of the kingdom of Babylon; and the king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?”

And “while the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, unto thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee; \* \* \* \* The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, and his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws. And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto



me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that liveth forever, and whose dominion is an everlasting dominion. \* \* \* And for the glory of mine kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me, and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me."

Thus minutely have I rehearsed the record, because every part of it seems to me to be pregnant with profoundest meaning. Certain passages of scripture Martin Luther was accustomed to call "Little Bibles," because they seemed to summarize the whole of revealed religion. This chapter pre-eminently deserves such a designation. It is a veritable chapter in the history of a king of Babylon; but far more than that, it is an epitome of the history of the race.

It is a dream indeed, but how far-reaching in its vision, as it sublimely sweeps from man's creation to the final consummation, from the fall to the restitution, from Eden to the New Jerusalem!

Nebuchadnezzar we have here, but far more than Nebuchadnezzar. He stands forth as the representative of our common humanity, and his dream is *THE DREAM OF HISTORY*.

I. *UNFALLEN MAN* rises before us, represented by that tree that God had planted in the midst of the earth, and whose top reached up to the very heavens. Erect he stood in native dignity and glorious strength, and though rooted upon earth, he towered so loftily, intellectually and morally, that he was but "a little lower than the angels."

The beasts of the field reposed in peace beneath the shadow of the tree, and cozily nestled the fowls of the air amid its spreading boughs, thus unmistakably indicating the beautiful and beneficent relation that was sustained by man to the creatures that were below him. He was the tallest thing on earth, and all things else looked up to him, clustering closely around him, and recognizing in him their terrestrial lord. So that not only in dignity and nobility did he reach unto the heavens, but in authority he reached unto the ends of the earth.

"Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands." He was God's vice-gerent, as being made in God's image, and beast and bird, and wind and wave, and all the myriad forces of the material world obeyed implicitly his high behest.

No language can describe, no imagination can picture the glory of primeval man. The word of God gives us glimpses of it—the traditions of nations in all lands give us whispers of it—but we are still immeasurably removed from any adequate conception of it. And if any man murmur or repine because of the lowness of his present



level, and the humiliating limitations of his earthly condition, and be tempted reproachfully to ask the Almighty, "Why hast Thou made me thus?" I find an answer in the word of God, yea in this very chapter—God never made him *thus*, but rather in the similitude of that towering tree, so stately in its height, so sturdy in its strength, so beautiful in its foliage, so abundant in its fruit, the glory of earth and the admiration of heaven. What we see now is only *what is left of him*; and as to just how he came to be the marred and mutilated thing he is, we are not left to mere conjecture, for

II. MAN'S FALL is taught us in this Dream of History, and in no doubtful language:

"Hew it down," says the watcher, even the Holy One, "and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches." There can be no question but *a fall* is meant, and *that* fall was profoundly typical of *the* Fall, whose awful crash resounded through the universe.

But why, we cannot fail to ask, should so noble a growth be laid so low? Why, from the lips of the watcher, even the Holy One, should there break so stern a sentence? Why "hew down" that which lifts its head so loftily to testify for God? Aye, the secret is here. That tree stands for Nebuchadnezzar, and Nebuchadnezzar stands for Adam, for he is a child of Adam, and a type of the race. Mark but his fall, and that which brought him down, for just so Adam fell from the glory of his first estate.

"At the end of twelve months, he walked on the palace roof of the kingdom of Babylon. And the king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?"

"While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken—the kingdom is departed from thee."

What have we here in this ungrateful ignoring of the Lord Almighty, this proud exaltation of the "I" and "MY," this selfish appropriation of that which of right belonged exclusively to HIM, and for which HE should have the glory, but the root of all rebellion, and the very essence of Adam's sin?

Adam stood in the midst of all the world's wealth and splendor, for which he was indebted to the God that gave him being, and gave him "all things richly to enjoy," but instead of humble and loyal obedience and love, with selfish greed he sought to grasp what God had forbidden him even to touch, and proudly said, in the intoxication of power, "Not THOU, but I"—"Not THINE, but MINE."



Pride dragged the angels down to hell, as Paul gives us to understand when he writes to Timothy, "Not a novice, lest being *lifted up with pride*, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." And pride was at the bottom of the sin in Eden. It was not so silly and absurd a thing as the possibly delicious flavor of a yet untasted fruit. I have a higher opinion of Adam than to suppose that he was capable of any such beastly stupidity as *that*—but the secret was here: "Ye shall be AS GODS"—this was the tempting bait that the infernal angler used, and with what success we sadly know.

Pride, reaching out its hand in Eden—pride, lifting up its head in Babylon—pride, to-day, deifying the laws of nature, and outlawing the Deity—pride, flattering itself with fantastic theories of development, according to which, the universe beginning with unorganized particles, culminates in man, and man culminates in the philosopher, and the philosopher culminates in the Darwinian type, so that the representative of this theory stands on the very pinnacle of the universe, everything below him and nothing above—pride, rejecting redemption as a work of supererogation, and spurning revelation as a hindrance, rather than a help to man's all-sufficient reason—pride, breaking out in the infamous blasphemy of Ingersoll, or lurking in the bosom of the self-complacent moralist, who patronizes religion without stooping to partake of its privileges—pride, everywhere, and always is the root-sin of our ruined race, and in this regard the king of Babylon finds his counterpart in every sinful human soul. And not only so, but

III. MAN'S FALLEN CONDITION is very vividly and truthfully portrayed in this Dream of History.

The beasts were to get away from under the tree, and the fowls from its branches, thus indicating by no doubtful figure the sundering of the benignant bond by which all lower nature had been bound to man. Having rebelled against his rightful Lord, all nature in turn rebelled against him, and took on shapes, and uttered sounds of savagery. The serpent, coiled in the path, lay waiting for his footstep; the lion crouched and made ready to spring; the elephant, with trumpeting proboscis came striding after him; the deep yawned and threatened to devour him; the sun smote him; the hail pelted him; the marsh exhaled its malaria to poison him; the lightning scathed him; and so he found himself at the mercy of those myriad potent elements, of which but lately he was the happy monarch.

And not only so, but it was solemnly announced, that "They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field." One cannot fail to note the closeness of the parallel with the melancholy record which is found in Genesis—"Therefore the Lord



God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man."

Thus, from the high, manly fellowship with God and angels, he was banished henceforth to range upon life's lower plain. And not without significance is it added, that "a beast's heart was given him, and he did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

There is a form of madness called "lycanthropy," the victim of which imagines himself to be a beast, and assumes beastly habits and utters beastly cries.

Some mania like this was that which befell the once proud king of Babylon. Nor was he singular in this regard, for when man fell by an act of disobedience, his reason reeled beneath the curse of God, and now lycanthropy, either latent or patent, is the common characteristic of depraved humanity.

One of the grandest poets England ever saw has given us, in lofty prose, this melancholy legend: "It was toward the close of the Golden Age, (the memory of which the self-dissatisfied race of man have everywhere preserved and cherished); when conscience acted with the ease and uniformity of instinct, when labor was a sweet name for the activity of sane minds in healthful bodies, and all enjoyed the bounteous harvests gathered by common effort; when the dread Sovereign of the universe was known only as the universal parent, no altar but the pure heart, and grateful love the sole sacrifice. In this blest age of innocence, one of the elders of the human race, whose absence, by reason of its length, was beginning to be noticed, entered with hurrying steps the place of their common assemblage at noon, and instantly attracted universal wonder by the perturbation of his gestures, and by a strange trouble both in his eyes and over all his countenance. After a short, deep silence, and when the buzz of inquiry was becoming audible, he ascended a small eminence and thus addressed the listening throng: At mid-day, O comrades, I had sought repose in the cavern whence issues the river that winds through our vale, when a voice sweet and awful sounded on my ear these solemn words—'Sojourner of earth, hasten to the meeting of thy brethren, and what thou hearest now from me do thou repeat to them. Yet thirty days and a cloud shall come, out of whose bosom, for thrice three days and thrice three nights, a heavy rain shall fall on the face of the earth. Go ye, therefore, ere the thirtieth sun shall rise, retreat to the cavern of the river, and there abide till the clouds be gone. For know ye of a certainty, that whomsoever that rain shall wet, yea on him, and on his children's



children, the spirit of madness shall assuredly fall.' Yes, madness was the word of the voice. What this may be I know not, but at the sound of the word, trembling came upon me, and a feeling which I would not have had, and I remained even as ye now behold me.

"He ended and retired. Confused murmurs succeeded, and wonder and doubt. Day followed day, and every day brought with it a diminution of the dread.

"The ominous morn arrived, the prophet retired to the appointed cavern, and remained for the appointed time. On the tenth morning he emerged from his shelter and sought his friends and brethren. But alas, how affrightful the change that had passed upon them. Instead of the common children of one great family, he looked and beheld *here* a miserable wretch, watching over a heap of hard and unnutritious substances, which he had dug out of the earth at the cost of mangled limbs and exhausted faculties. This he appeared to worship, at this he gazed, even as the youths of the vale at their chosen virgins, in the first season of their choice. *There* he saw a former companion panting after a butterfly, or a withered leaf whirling onward in the breeze; and another with pale and distorted countenance, following close behind and stretching forth a dagger to stab his precursor in the back. In another place he observed a whole troop of his fellow men famishing and in fetters, yet led by one of their brethren who had enslaved them. For the first time the prophet missed his accustomed power of distinguishing between his dreams and his waking perceptions.

"He stood gazing and motionless, when several of the race gathered around him, and inquired of each other, 'Who is this man? How strangely he looks! how wild!' 'A worthless idler!' exclaims one. 'Assuredly a very dangerous madman!' cries a second. In short, from words they proceeded to violence; till harrassed, endangered, solitary, in a world of forms like his own, without sympathy, without object of love, he at length espied, in some fosse or furrow, a quantity of the maddening water still unevaporated. Uttering the last words of reason, 'IT IS IN VAIN TO BE SANE IN A WORLD OF MADMEN,' plunged and rolled himself in the liquid poison, and came out as mad, and not more wretched than his neighbors and acquaintances."

With what sober truth it has been said that the world in which we live is the bedlam of the universe.

How fitting a type of our fallen race was that fierce demoniac of Gadara, wandering solitary among the tombs, crouching like a beast of prey to spring upon the unsuspecting traveller in the way, cutting and wounding himself with stones, incapable of restraint, and untamable by any earthly agency.



True it is, that even fallen man has intellectual faculties of still gigantic grasp, and these considered collectively, we are accustomed to designate as reason. But if reason, in its proper sense, be the faculty of perceiving truth in its highest and grandest relations, then humanity in its fallen state has surely lost it, and man bereft of that, and brutalized, goes forth to the indulgence of those lower propensities of his nature, that ally him more closely to animals than angels. And as Nebuchadnezzar wandered thus among the beasts, until "his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws," so even the outward form of man that once stood erect and Godlike, clothed in native innocence, now diseased and debased, bears witness to the deeper degradation of the spirit that dwells within, and which brain and bosom canopy and cover.

The miserable prodigal, wandering away from his father's house, famishing in a far-off land, herding with swine, and vainly seeking to satisfy his hunger with the husks that were only fit for swine, is God's own representation of man's bestialized condition. And yet this Dream of History gives us

IV. HOPE FOR FALLEN MAN—"Hew down the tree," said the watcher and the Holy One, "and cut off his branches, and shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; NEVERTHELESS"—and here breaks forth a beam of light, and here sounds out a voice of mercy—"nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven." Aye, "There is hope of a tree" says the patriarch of Uz, "if it be cut down, that through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant."

Hewn down was this goodly tree that the king of Babylon had beheld in his dream, but it was not extirpated utterly. There was something left of it, even the root of it, deep down in the ground, which suggested the possibility and the hope that from that root the tree might rise.

Even so man fell, and his once magnificent nature lay prostrate in the dust; but he fell not as the angels, for whom there neither is, nor can be, any provision of redemption. Man went down beneath the sharp stroke of Divine retribution, but there was something left *of* him, and something left *in* him—deep down below the surface soil of the soul—the *roots* of a nature originally Godlike, and still so noble as to be capable of receiving the mysterious engrafting of the grace of God.

I believe in the doctrine of human depravity—that the virus of sin has so tainted every fibre of the body and every faculty of the soul, as to justify us in teaching that that depravity is total, and yet it is an



infinite mercy to be assured that in him there do still remain *redemptive possibilities*. *Hope* is there, though it sing not now any more of heaven. And *love* is there, though it rise no more toward the throne of God. And *conscience* is there, though dim-eyed and slow-footed. And vague, vast yearnings are there for the good, the true, the beautiful, the infinite, the eternal. God left not the race without a chance, nor himself without a witness, even in the bosom of humanity itself.

That something that was left in man, God tenderly took precautions to preserve from perishing, even as "the roots of the tree were compassed about with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field."

God might in justice have removed all restraints of his providence and grace, and then the race, let loose, would have rotted long ago. But God never let go; in the midst of wrath he remembered mercy. Man misunderstood him even then, and that stern surrounding of law and retribution, of natural conscience, and providential dispensation, man resented as an encroachment on his liberty, and an interference with his joy. True, it was not a silken cord with which he was encircled, but an unyielding band of iron and brass, and yet it was a hand of love that girded him about with such stern restraint, and so conserved his only chance for the development of life again.

Nor is this all, for immediately it is added: "And let it be wet with the dew of heaven." And very beautiful is "the tender mercy" which these words do so naturally suggest. For even though the root were left, still if the earth were as iron and the heavens as brass, the root would have gone to swift decay. But God is mindful of poor human nature, even though there be nothing left of the stock but the stump, and so from the silent heavens the grateful dews distil, and thus through all the ages he kept the race from perishing. "My speech shall distil as the dew," and saith the Lord, by the mouth of Hosea, "I will be as the dew unto Israel," and *therefore* "he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

Not stern and cold and hard is He that sits enthroned in glory inaccessible, but upon our fallen humanity, even in its lowest and unloveliest conditions, He pours from on high the softening influences of His grace, even as He sheds his dew not only on the cedar of Lebanon and the lily of the valley, but on the deadly Upas and the noxious weed.

But not only have we here bright intimations and suggestions of hope; we have distinctly set before us, in a figure, in this Dream of History, the glorious assurance of



V. RECOVERY OF FALLEN MAN—For notice it is written: “At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that liveth forever. \* \* \* At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me, and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.”

“At the end of the days” it came to pass. Very long and sad and weary days, but when the *seven* times had passed over him, and this seven is God’s symbol of a perfect number, *then* God’s purposes having ripened, God’s corrective and preparatory discipline having served its purpose, there came a revelation of mercy to the humbled king, and a restoration to the throne from which he had been banished to consort with cattle. Even thus was God’s dealing with the race at large, of which it is said, “Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.”

Aye, this was the depth of debasement into which man was plunged, until seven times passed over him, and then “in the fulness of times,” God graciously and marvellously interposed for his deliverance. And very complete and glorious is the deliverance of redemption that is here set forth in a history that is also pregnant with sublimest prophecy.

Very striking and significant is that declaration of Nebuchadnezzar: “At the same time my reason returned unto me.” And to like effect is that record in the parable of the prodigal: “And when he was come to himself” he said; meaning thereby to intimate that he had been “beside himself” before, as indeed he was, for no man truly comes to himself until he comes to God his Father.

Returning rationality is the first fruit of redemption. “Clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus.” This is the character and condition of the man whom grace has rescued. Aye, and his “honor and brightness” now return to him. He is reinvested with the title and dominion he had forfeited. Arrayed in a robe more beautiful and costly than ever fell from the shoulders of a king—for it is the seamless, spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness, a robe washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb—he ascends a throne more magnificent than Solomon’s, and wields a sceptre more potent than was ever grasped by any king of Babylon, for God is his Father, angels



his ministers, and "all things" are his possessions. Already the powers of nature that had broken loose from His control are bowing their necks submissively to his yoke, and wind and wave, beast and bird, steam and lightning, are being harnessed to His chariot, and our Christian civilization is a perpetual march of triumph. What grander trophies shall grace the monumental arches of the far stretching future no finite imagination can conjecture, only this we may be assured of, they shall be gathered by Christian hands, and they shall adorn Christian lands, for unto Christian men shall be given earth's glory and dominion. Already the glory of redeemed humanity is beaming forth in Christian character, and giving to the world such splendid types of manhood and of womanhood, that beside them Hercules and Venus, which were the old time ideals of manly strength and womanly beauty, seem hideous monsters disgorged by the pit.

But the full breadth of the dominion of restored humanity is a thing for the future to establish and declare. The "time of the restitution of all things" has not yet fully come. As yet "the whole creation groaneth in pain, waiting for the adoption—to wit, the redemption of our bodies." There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, and then over regenerated nature shall reign in glory regenerated man.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is."

We see not yet what man is to be when his recovery is perfected, and "we see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Jesus," who is "the first-born of many brethren," clothed with our glorified humanity, and seated on the topmost throne of heaven, and that is the pledge and prophecy of the future exaltation of every son of Adam, who by faith's reception of the Saviour has become a son of God.

Surely here is a possible destiny, sublime enough to fire the soul with noblest aspiration!

Longfellow stirs our blood, when in the Psalm of Life he sings:

"Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our own sublime,  
And when dying leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time."

Aye, verily, "on the sands of time," which the throbbing tides shall presently so ruthlessly efface. Surely a worthy ambition reaches higher and farther than such fast-fading footprints "on the sands of time," even to fadeless bliss, and the perfected manhood to be realized alone upon the shores of eternity.



I address myself to men and women, who, though fallen, have not fallen so far but that there is within them a conscious capacity which has never yet been filled by anything which earth can give; who, though lost, are not so utterly lost as to be insensible to the fact that the life they habitually lead is one unworthy of candidates for immortality, and who are frequently filled with loathing because of their surroundings, and stung with self-contempt because they cannot rise superior to their surroundings.

I appeal to these to "lift up their eyes unto heaven," whence all help cometh, even as did the king of Babylon, in the hope that their reason may be returned and their restoration achieved.

I have somewhere read a legend of a Mediæval prince who had been spirited away from his palace by his enemies, and was supposed to be confined somewhere in a foreign castle. A devoted courtier determined, if possible, to discover the place of his concealment and effect his rescue. And so, disguised as a minstrel, he wandered over many lands, and underneath the windows of many an ancient castle he would sweep his harp strings, while with his voice pouring forth a song of home, whose unforgotten music, he was sure, would stir the prince's heart if he were there, and bring him to the window to look out and listen. Nor was his faithful search in vain. The captive prince who long had pined in hopeless woe, so long that even the spirit of resistance to captivity had died out in his bosom, heard softly stealing out upon the air, one day, a sound that startled him out of his stony grief—a harp, a voice, a song—that thrilled him, filled him, transported him back to the home of his childhood and the friends of his youth.

Up sprang he to gaze through the grated window, and exchanged eager signals with his joyful deliverer. Even so I come with a song of the Fatherland, a song of the Fatherlove, a dream song, freighted with memories of better, brighter, happier days, assured that in the soul of every human being there is *a something* pointing backward, and whispering sadly of a home long left, and of bliss long lost.

I come with this old, old story, in the hope that the imprisoned soul, so long imprisoned as to have almost lost the ambition to be free, may be induced to rouse itself, that the better nature may assert itself, and looking forth from its barred windows, with imploring hands may signal, not the poor preacher who has himself no power to deliver either his own soul or that of another, but HIM who left His throne in heaven, and has come into this fallen world to *seek* and to save that which was lost; Him who comes travelling in the greatness of His strength, glorious in His apparel, MIGHTY TO SAVE.